

The Good, The Bad and The Dirty by lenaismad

Series: Eleven Days of Harringrove [4]

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Summary:

In which Billy is a villain and Steve is a superhero.

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Author's Note:

Based on The Good, The Bad and The Dirty by Panic!
At The Disco (And Throne by BMTH)

Alternative universe one-shot (very strange and a little twisted, doesn't have a happy ending - just a fair warning).

There's violence, self harm [kind of?], a lot and a lot and a lot of angst.

Enjoy, I guess?

Billy Hargrove let his muscles relax, allowed his body to crash down onto the couch. His head fell back as he pulled the cigarette out of his mouth and exhaled. He watched smoke twist and turn until the last swirls of grey dissolved into thin air. His eyelids fluttered close for a fleeting moment of vulnerability. He didn't care that blood from his clothes was seeping into the cushions. He didn't care that the Persian carpet was ruined by the grime from the soles of his boots. He could snap his fingers and get dozens, hundreds of new ones. Fuck, just one command and he could make someone lick them clean for him.

His elbows came down onto his knees. He reached up, undoing the straps of his mask and pulling it off. He looked at his hands, at the ash that was edged into every line, every crevice, every scar that covered his skin. When the mask was on he wasn't Billy Hargrove anymore – he was Gasoline, or at least that's what people dubbed him. First he was referred to as The Devil. Then reporters covering his stories started calling him ridiculous names like Hellbringer, Inferno, Firestarter – generic aliases for a villain with his line of abilities. A mysterious figure that burned to ashes anything and anyone that stood in his path? A new villain who brought horror and ruin to the streets of their city? People didn't want his real name, they didn't wasn't to see his face, they didn't want to hear his story, they didn't want reasons why. All they wanted was a sensation, something to whisper about to spice up their mediocre day to day lives. "Did you hear? How horrible. How dreadful. 30 people?"

Heartbreaking. We are all praying for them." They didn't care about who those people were, what horrors they have caused. To them, what Billy did was just a source of morbid entertainment. They were just as bad as he was – animals who savored the pain of others. And what was the damage to them? Nothing but a mere inconvenience of having to use a different road if their usual one was closed off. If their hands weren't those being burned by his flames, he was nothing but a phantom, a story, a legend to them.

Billy hated it, hated them with burning, scorching, boiling passion. But if they craved havoc, if they wanted destruction, he would gladly deliver. He would give them headlines they'd never forget. So instead of doing his job quietly, he made his actions seem like exaggerated acts of gory vengeance. He made a name for himself. He dipped his fingers in gasoline, painted a phrase on the walls, ceilings, sidewalks, of the places where he left the corpses. You are ash and to ash you shall return. He ignited the letters, let the words burn, he left them as a reminder not because he wanted to but because he could. He was sure it would cause outrage among the masses. People didn't like it when their God was being mocked. The twisted sentence taken out of the Bible became his signature. And so he had earned his new name. He let the media exploit him, antagonize him. He let the aura of hatred raise up around him, he let it envelop him. He became fear. He became the personification of terror. And he learned to relish it. He watched silently as this character, this thing he wasn't even close to, was forged out of him – Gasoline, the villain with fire dwelling in his fingertips.

The mask slipped out of his hands, it fell down onto the carpet with a hollow thud. Billy's eyes were blurry, his gaze far away, distanced. He brought his hands up, raked his fingers over his face, through his hair. The man he had killed today had begged for his life. He begged and Billy pulled the trigger anyway (for he never killed anyone with his flames – he knew all too well the horror of smelling his own flesh burn). The man had not been innocent – none of them were. The man had killed dozens of people himself. He must have looked into the eyes of his begging victims and Billy doubted he had ever granted them mercy. But Billy was not a cold-blooded killer – despite his belief that purging the world of rotten, truly bad people was the right thing to do, he was not a monster, and the feeling of clawing guilt

tortured him more and more with every step he took, until he couldn't take it anymore. So he taught himself to turn it into something entirely different – true hunger for vengeance.

He inhaled, exhaled. He let his hands slip out of his hair. He wiped his palms on his thighs, the ash blending in with the dark bulletproof material of his pants. He snapped his head up. His eyes glinted with new surge of purpose. He stood up, stretched his muscles, cracking his bones. He walked with serene steadiness in his footsteps towards one of the bookshelves that lined the room. He reached out his battered fingers. He let them linger over several spines until he found the folder he was looking for.

Project Flycatcher, he called it. He was so close. He were mere inches away from finishing the complex scheme of defeating the man who could have saved him on the day he was made into this shell of a human being, the man who he used to call a friend, the man he used to be in love with. He had the hero they called 'Invincible' at his fingerprints. He would defeat the undefeatable Steve Harrington once and for all.

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Steve Harrington sat on the roof of the tallest building in the city. His feet were dangling dangerously over the edge and he wondered if he'd survive the fall. He supposed he didn't really care all that much. After all, his wellbeing hadn't been his concern ever since the accident.

He pulled out a knife out of his back pocket. He snapped it open and admired the way the afternoon sun made the blade glitter. This piece of metal had been his best friend, his refuge, for as long as he could remember. Even before he had become the beloved and adored superhero everyone seemed to admire these days. He sliced at his arm with almost bored indifference in his movements. The blade buried itself deep in his flesh. There was no pain, not even a hint, as he pulled the knife out. Before he could have a good look at the wound, his skin started mending itself, tethering itself together until it looked as unmarked as it did moments ago.

Steve sighed. This was how he spent most of these empty moments –

pushing the limits of his power, wondering how much further he could go until he'd hit the line he was trying to find so desperately, until he would hit his breaking point.

Today he just needed to slow down the ceaseless, persistent velocity of his heartbeat, for today he was going to face Billy, no not Billy – Gasoline, for the first time in months. An anonymous caller, someone who claimed to be working with the man himself, called in on Monday. The guy asked for nothing more than immunity for himself and his family in exchange for information on Billy. He said he would reveal his identity once Gasoline was dealt with. That was an offer no one could afford to turn down. The man told them everything, every gruesome plan Billy had forged and the office had been buzzing with excitement ever since – what a fool Gasoline was for not keeping the people he worked with in check.

And so Steve was waiting. Billy needed to be stopped. Steve would have never though, would have never even fathomed the notion of Billy being capable of such monstrosities. But it was partially his fault, wasn't it? He had held himself accountable for every single flame that came out of Billy's hands. That's the sole reason he had even taken up the path of become a 'superher' – he was mockery of the term, really. To him, what he was doing was nothing more than righting the wrongs he had caused, but in the public eye he was their savior, the hero to Billy's villain. He was celebrated, beloved. His every action was glorified. And he hated every second of it.

He didn't want to hurt Billy, at least not the Billy he had known all those years ago. But this person (Gasoline, not Billy, for Billy was gone) had to be stopped and Steve was the only one who could do it. He was Invincible after all.

The room was big and damp, just like the rest of the building. Water was dripping from the pipes that spread over the ceiling. The echo of Steve's footsteps was deafening in the sinister silence of the empty space. Billy was supposed to be here. Had the call been just a stupid prank to waste his time? Or had Billy uncovered the traitorous tendencies of his accomplice? Steve hoped not – God knew what Billy would do to the poor bastard.

The soles of Steve's feet splashed in a shallow puddle of gathered water, the sound suddenly being broken by a strangled groan coming from somewhere deeper in the warehouse.

Steve legs carried him with uncharacteristic agility as he ran towards the noise. He door scraped against the concrete as he forced them open.

There was a man tied to a chair in the middle of the smaller room. The man's beaten down form was dimly illuminated by the city lights that seeped in through the gaps in the boarded-up windows. Steve kneeled down beside him, putting a reassuring hand onto his shoulder. The man opened his eyes slowly, as if the simple action drained all of the energy out of him.

"Are you okay?" Steve asked and cursed himself for ever thinking of such a stupid question – he was obviously not okay.

The man let out another muffled groan as he looked up. His mouth was gagged and his hands were tied with thick ropes so tightly they must have had very little circulation left in them.

"Hold on, I'm going to help you get out," Steve said, pulling out his pocket knife. The man didn't seem reassured by Steve's words. His bloodshot eyes were intently focused on his face as if he was waiting for him to say something, do something. Steve stayed crouched down by his feet, maintaining the gradually more and more uncomfortable eye contact. The man was the one to lose the staring contest when his eyes flickered to something behind Steve for a fraction of a second. By the time, he looked back, it was too late.

Billy had a syringe buried deep inside Steve's neck. He pushed the plunger until the entirety of liquid was emptied into Steve's bloodstream. Steve's flesh might heal instantly, but his blood was just as ordinary as everyone else's. The anesthetic took immediate effect. Billy watched Steve's eyes roll into the back of his head and his body go utterly limp. He let him fall.

Billy turned his attention to the man in the chair. His demeanor was completely changed – his posture was relaxed, his eyebrow was raised in silent question, he seemed like he wanted to say something,

only being stopped by the annoying fabric in his mouth. Billy sighed and pried the knife out of Steve's unprotesting hand. He walked around the chair and cut the ropes in few quick motions.

"Fuck," Cole groaned, massaging his wrist, "did you really have to tie me up that tight? It's not like I was about to make a run for it."

"We were going for authentic, not comfortable, Cole," Billy replied, disinterest marking his voice.

"Whatever man," Cole said, amusedly looking down at Steve's numb body. "Can't believe you actually got him. Not so invincible anymore, huh?" He gave him one mocking kick, just for the sake of it.

"Enough," Billy warned. He reached into the inside pocket of his jacked, pulling out a thick roll of money. He threw it at Cole who caught it with more grace than he expected from the thug. Billy dismissed him with a not particularly subtle gesture towards the door. Now he didn't have time for bullshit. Steve was of so much more importance.

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Steve came round with a throaty gasp. He gulped in air as if he had been kept underwater and was now in dire of need of oxygen. He was disoriented, still drowsy from the drug. His vision was hazy. It took too much time for blurry shapes to become objects. He hung his head low and couched. Fuck, his throat was dry.

"Hello, sunshine. Slept well?" asked a taunting voice that was more familiar than Steve wanted to admit.

"What do you want from me?" Steve spat, vigor lacing his voice. This wasn't the turn things were supposed to take tonight – he wasn't the one who was supposed to be tied to a chair.

"Sweet, sweet revenge," answered Billy, emerging from the shadows. There was no point in lying – Steve wouldn't make it through the night anyway.

"You are a monster."

Billy thought it would sting more than it did. He thought it would break his heart, shatter the last fragments he had left of his soul. But it didn't. It only ignited a hollow ache in his chest. "Monsters are not real, Invincible. There is no good or bad. There are only people who can tame the evil and those who lose the fight."

Steve shook his head. "You are wrong."

"You don't say it with much conviction," Billy shrugged.

"You are a monster, Billy," Steve said, a look of pure resentment rising up into his eyes. "You are a monster if I've ever seen one. You murder people for your own sick enjoyment. You killed your father, for God's sake."

Anger rose up in Billy's throat, clouded in judgment. How could Steve be so blind? How could he not see? He kicked his leg up, his feet colliding with the seat of the chair right between Steve's parted knees, and he pushed. The crash of the chair hitting the ground, of Steve's head banging against the concrete brought Billy a momentary surge of guilty pleasure. "You do not know me," he hissed with his teeth clenched so tight he thought they might break. With every word he came closer closer to Steve until he was standing with his combat boots on either side of Steve's torso. "You have no fucking idea who I am and what I do and why I do it." He lowered himself down onto Steve's chest, the sudden weight of Billy's body forcing the air out of his lungs. "You have no fucking right to judge me."

The bright light of the single light bulb hit Billy's face—true and raw and unmasked. The sight knocked air out of Steve completely. For a moment he was left in a state of utter void of emotion. Then everything came crashing down onto him in full horrifying force. Seeing the scars, seeing the skin that had once been smooth and unmarked permanently damaged by flames that Billy now had to carry as a constant reminder of what had happened all those years ago.

Steve closed his eyes, fighting the tears that threatened to spill. Images of that damning night flashed on his closed eyelids. The flames, Billy screaming for Steve to help him, Steve being unable to do anything – completely powerless, empty handed, desperate, fire

licking at his skin, him not feeling anything, Billy begging, begging, begging for him to save him. That night their powers manifested. Steve came out unscratched – not because the inferno didn't touch his skin, but because his body healed before any wounds could form, and Billy was left with too many scars to count and fire that made home out of his fingerprints. Steve hadn't seen him maskless since. Having a look at the damage that had been done... God he wished he could go back in time, he wished he could take his place.

"I'm going to destroy you," Billy whispered, pulling out a cigarette and lighting it with a mere touch of his fingers. "I'm going to ruin you," he promised, a Steve would let him, wouldn't even protest.

Billy contemplated him, took his time analyzing every single of Steve's flawless features. He cocked his head to the side, pulling the cigarette out of his mouth and offering Steve a drag. Steve parted his lips, taking it bud into his mouth and pulling the burning smoke into his lungs. Billy took a drag himself, then he lowered the burring Tabaco onto Steve's cheek, letting the embers scorch his skin, extinguishing the flame in the process.

Steve felt nothing. Billy sighed.

"What do I do with you?" Billy asked, looking down at the boy who used to mean so much to him. Now he was nothing but a fable of a past he could barely recall.

"Whatever you want," said Steve, looking up with so much remorse and sadness in his eyes it was hard to believe he could feel no pain.

Author's Note:

Okay, I know this is hell of an open ending, but it's that kind of a concept that if I actually wanted to write a satisfiable ending, it would end up being 10 000 words long and no one wants that. I don't know - just decide for yourself. [Billy definitely isn't killing Steve. I mean c'mon - I do write angst, just not that much angst]